

June 4, 2017

“The Man of Lawlessness”

Focal Passage: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
(NASB)

Cross References: Matthew 24; Revelation 19:11-21

Lesson Idea: We need to be aware of the coming of the lawless one, so we will be prepared but not scared.

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

May 28 Neh 10-11	May 29 Neh 12-13
May 30 Esther 1-5	May 31 Esther 6-10
June 1 Job 1-4	June 2 Job 5-7
June 3 Job 8-10	June 4 Job 11-13

Background: Paul assured the Thessalonians that they had not missed the coming of the Lord and shared some signs of the end times.

From David Guzik, *2 Thessalonians*:

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him: Paul is obviously addressing questions raised by his first letter, where he instructed the Thessalonians about the catching away of the church to be with Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

The challenge in understanding this chapter comes from the fact that it is a supplement to what Paul has already taught them in words, and we don't know exactly what Paul said to the Thessalonians. (see v 5) Yet the ideas are clear enough if carefully pieced together.

We ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled: Apparently, a misunderstanding of Paul's teaching; or an incorrect application of it, had caused the Thessalonians to be shaken in mind and troubled. Here Paul uses a strong wording, speaking of both a sudden jolt (shaken in mind) and a continuing state of upset (troubled). Their fears centered on the idea that the day of Christ had [already] come. . .

The day of the Lord is a concept with a rich Old Testament background, and was mentioned in Paul's previous letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 5:2). It is not a single day, but a period associated with God's outpouring of judgment and the deliverance of God's people. A significant aspect of the day of the Lord is the Great Tribulation described in Matthew 24:1-31.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

¹Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ²that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. ⁸Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹²in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

DISCUSSION:

- v 1. What else will happen to believers at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?
- v 2. Why did Paul tell them not to be “shaken from their composure?” Why should we not be worried about the coming of the Lord? (see Matthew 24)
- v 3. What did Paul say would happen before the day of the Lord? What is “apostasy?”

NOTE: from Guzik: **Unless the falling away comes first:**

The ancient Greek wording for falling away indicates a rebellion or a departure. Bible scholars debate if it refers to an apostasy among those who once followed God, or a general worldwide rebellion. In fact, Paul may have both in mind, because there is evidence of each in the end times (1 Timothy 4:1-3, 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Timothy 4:3-4). But Paul's point is clear: “You are worried that we are in the Great Tribulation and that you missed the rapture. But you can know that we are not in the Great Tribulation, because we have not yet seen the falling

away that comes first.” . . . **The falling away:** The article makes it even more significant. This is not a falling away, but the falling away, the great and final rebellion.

- v 3-5. How does Paul describe the “man of lawlessness?” How will we know him?

NOTE: from Guzik: **And the man of sin is revealed:** Before the Great Tribulation can be identified with certainty, a particular person, known as the man of sin, must be revealed. . . The most traditional understanding of this man of sin is to say that he is not an individual, but a system or an office. . . . However, there is no good reason to see this man of sin to be other than what the plainest meaning is here - an individual who will come to great prominence in the very last days. This was how it was understood in the earliest days of Christianity. “The fathers understood the Antichrist to be intended, but of this person they seemed to have formed no specific idea.” (Clarke). . . Daniel described an individual person: The prince who is to come (Daniel 9:26), the king of fierce countenance (Daniel 8:23), the willful king (Daniel 11:36-45). . . Jesus described an individual person: The one who comes in his own name (John 5:43). . . This man of sin is a prominent figure in the Bible, and the ultimate personification of the spirit of the Antichrist spoken of in 1 John 4:2-3.

Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or is worshipped: The man of sin demands worship for himself that belongs to God only (Luke 4:8). This demand for worship is also described in Revelation 13:1-6. . . **So that he sits as God in the temple of God:** The man of sin’s demand for worship will be so extreme, he will set himself up as God in the temple at Jerusalem, demanding this blasphemous worship from everyone (Revelation 13:14-15 and Matthew 24:15; Matthew 24:21; Matthew 24:29-31). . . The specific ancient Greek word for temple indicates the most holy place of the not the temple as a whole. “It is not that he enters the temple precincts: he invades the most sacred place and there takes his seat. His action is itself a claim to deity.” (Morris) This is the ultimate blasphemy that results in certain judgment, the abomination of desolation spoken of by both Daniel and Jesus.

- v 6-7. What was restraining the man of lawlessness, and what still restrains him now? Paul said that “in his time he will be revealed.” What does that indicate about the foreknowledge and sovereignty of God? Why should that provide us with hope?

NOTE: from Guzik: **And now you know what is restraining:** For now, Satan and the man of sin are being restrained. The principle of their working is now present (the mystery of lawlessness is already at work). But at the right time, the Holy Spirit (*He who restrains*) their full revelation will be taken out of the way. . . **Taken out of the way:** We should not think that the Holy Spirit would leave the earth during the Great Tribulation. He will be present on the earth during the Great Tribulation because many are saved, sealed, and serve God during this period (Revelation 7:3-14 and Revelation 14:1-5), and this can’t happen without the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is taken out of the way, not removed.

- v 7. How is the “mystery of lawlessness” already at work? Who is “he” who now restrains? Why will “he” be taken out of the way?
- v 8. What will happen to the “lawless one?”

NOTE: from Guzik:

And then the lawless one will be revealed: Paul states two certain facts about the man of sin, here called the lawless one. First, it is certain that the lawless one will be revealed when the Holy Spirit removes His restraint. Second, it is certain that the lawless one will be destroyed by the mere brightness of Jesus at His coming.

Paul probably has Isaiah 11:4 in mind: *He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.* The Isaiah passage refers to the LORD - to Yahweh - but Paul freely used it of Jesus, recognizing that Jesus is Yahweh.

- v 9-10. How else does he describe the lawless one? Where does his power come from? What will his signs and false wonders do to people?
- v 10. Why will people perish? How does the love of truth help people become saved?
- v 11-12. What is meant by “a deluding influence,” and why will God send it? Why will they be judged?

APPLICATION:

- ✓ Why should the coming of the Day of the Lord bring us encouragement and not fear?